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TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/24): PALESTINIANS SEEK
"SERIOUS" U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL

Main Stories:

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida leads with wire coverage of Secretary Clinton's skepticism over progress in Palestinian "national unity" talks. All front pages run summaries of Clinton's April 23 remarks before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs and highlight Clinton's insistence that the U.S. will not deal with any Palestinian government that includes or supports Hamas unless Hamas accepts Middle East Quartet conditions. Extensive quotes are also run.

Al-Quds leads with news that Palestinians from the West Bank holding permits to enter Israel will soon need to register information into a special Israeli database. PLO chief negotiator Sa'eb Erikat accused the new measure of being an Israeli attempt to "impose facts on the ground" and indicated that the Palestinian Authority will raise the issue with the Middle East Quartet. Erikat also reiterated Palestinian calls on the International community and the U.S. to pressure Israel into dismantling the 600 checkpoints in the West Bank. Coverage also includes remarks by Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem Barakat rejecting Palestinian and Western calls to stop home demolitions in East Jerusalem. Barakat explains that the policy does not contradict the "Road Map" and adds that his goal is to have a Jewish majority in the city and maintain a "Jewish presence" by ensuring employment and housing for Jews.

In front page photo coverage, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Ayyam run a lead photo of an Israeli soldier pointing his weapon at an elderly Palestinian near Hebron. The caption explains that the Palestinian is watching bulldozers clear his private land for the purpose of expanding the nearby Israeli Carmel settlement.

Al-Quds' front page cites AFP in reporting on statements by Egyptian

President Mubarak confirming that Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman will not accompany Israeli Premier Netanyahu on his upcoming visit to Egypt. Egyptian Intelligence Chief Sulayman issued an invitation to Netanyahu, Defense Minister Barak and Lieberman, according to reporting.

The front pages of Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Ayyam, and an inside page in Al-Quds report on Palestinian Authority President (PA) Abbas meeting with the Czech Prime Minister in Ramallah on April 23.

According to coverage, the two leaders discussed bilateral relations, Palestinian "national unity" talks and "national reconciliation." In a related press conference, PA Prime Minister Fayyad noted that the success of peace talks will depend on Israeli acceptance of the two-state solution.

In Mission news, inside pages of the three dailies report on a StudyUSA Fair held in Ramallah on April 23 with the support of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. The fair, which included recruiters from 10 American colleges and universities, was also supported by AMIDEAST and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Higher Education. Al-Ayyam's inside page reports on an inauguration ceremony for a USAID water project in the Tubas area in the northern West Bank. -----

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Regular columnist Ahmad Hanun opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the title, "Why does the Netanyahu government reject the two state solution?" (04/24): "The Israeli Prime Minister has clearly stated without any ambiguity that Palestinian recognition of Israel

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as a Jewish state is a core condition for restarting peace negotiations. This clearly shows that all Israeli governments and leaders speak the same language... at the same time Israel does not want to recognize a Palestinian state and maintains severe restrictions on the ground, increasing Palestinian sufferings. [The situation in the Palestinian Territories] will deteriorate and make it difficult for any solution [to succeed] especially given the increase in home demolitions, increased settlement activities. It will leave no land on which to establish a Palestinian state."

2) Regular columnist Samih Shbayb opines in Al-Ayyam daily independent under the title, "Is there anything new in U.S. policy?!" (04/24): "It is obvious now that U.S. policy only focuses on prolonging negotiations between Palestinians and Israel without exerting any serious pressure on the party causing delays [Israel]. There are [troubling] factors on the ground like settlements, violations of international law, the wall... the U.S. should take a strong position that forces Israel to accept requirements for peace, thereby taking U.S. interests with the Arab world into consideration."

WALLES